

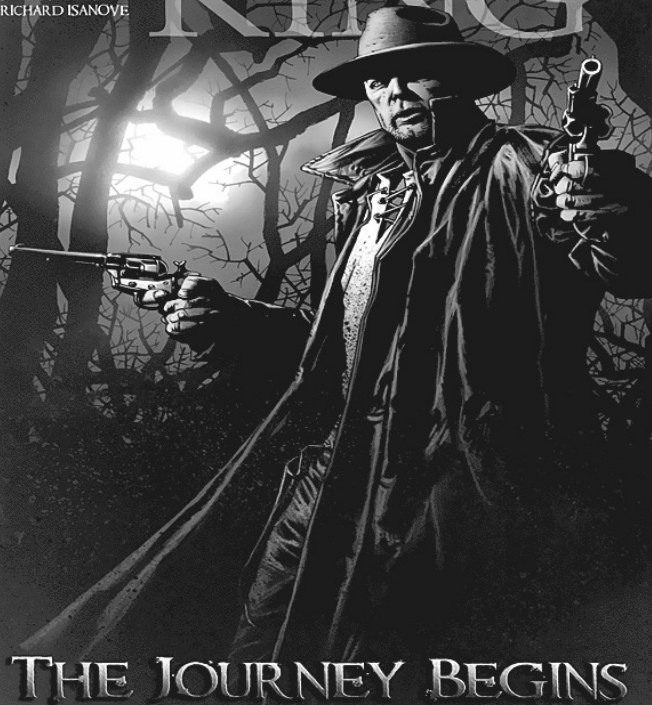
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THE DARK TOWER ~THE GUNSLINGER~



THE JOURNEY BEGINS

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IN A WORLD THAT HAS MOVED ON...

Roland Deschain is the last descendant of the line of Arthur Eld. His late father, Steven, was the king of the barony of Gilead. Seeking to emulate his father, Roland was the youngest man to ever become a gunslinger. Great forces have swirled around him since that day.

When Gilead was under attack by the armies of evil led by Walter O'Dim and the Good Man, John Farson, Steven Deschain was killed. His forces of the White known as The Affiliation faltered in their defense of the city. Roland and his ka-tet became Gilead's final barrier, and they, too, failed.

And for nigh unto ten years, Roland, the lone survivor of that last, losing battle, has pursued his destiny. His quest is to reach the mysterious Dark Tower wherein he can set this out-of-synch world right. And the key to his goal lies with the Man in Black, who Roland now doggedly tracks.

Along the way, the gunslinger stops at the cabin of an old man, when his mule dies of exhaustion. At dinner that evening, Roland reminisces about the aftermath of the battle of Jericho Hill wherein his entire ka-tet was slain, and Deschain himself was dumped upon a pile of corpses.

But one ka-tet member, Aileen, survives, though barely. She begs Roland to return her to Gilead to be buried with her father, Cort.

Once back in the ruins of his home barony and Aileen's burial complete, Roland encounters the ghost of Hax, the once chief chef in the kingdom's castle.

Roland flashes back to when he and Cuthbert overheard Hax selling out the Affiliation to John Farson and they turned Hax in to Steven Deschain.

Hax was hung for his crimes and now his ghost offers Roland "regret" for them.

Roland then stops in the town of Kingston where a Not-Man was being hanged; a strange entity brought into town by the evil John Farson and his forces.

But the Not-Man's brother, angered that Roland attempted to capture him at the hanging, kidnaps a waitress that Roland fancied, who reminded the gunslinger of his lost love, Susan Delagado.

Truth to tell, the Widow Black is a dyspeptic creature with scarcely a kind word for anyone.



But even she don't deserve to have her daughter yanked away by invisible monsters called Not-Men.

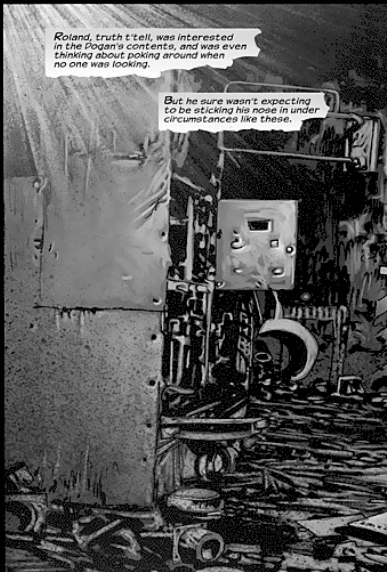


Straight as a bullet, the Billy Bumbler leads him to the Pogan on the Hill.



Roland, truth t'tell, was interested in the Pogan's contents, and was even thinking about poking around when no one was looking.

But he sure wasn't expecting to be sticking his nose in under circumstances like these.





And certainly her girl, Susan, did nothin' to warrant it.

Can you get her scent from this, Billy?

Yes.



Please! Please bring her back!

I won't lose her again, I swear.

The Widow, she calls after him, "Again?" But he ain't stayed around to answer.



Hard to believe you can track her through here, Billy.

The place stinks of death.

Yes.

Cort had plenty to teach his students about how to conduct themselves in strange, confined areas where enemies might be waiting.

Clearing the corners, checking behind doors.

Unfortunately, none of 'em mean a damned thing when your enemy's invisible.

You just pray you hear 'em before they do you in.

Silent as the grave is Roland, even as he prepares to send his enemy to join his silence.

Through there?

Yes.



Susan!
You! Back
away from
her!

If we'd fain
shoot me, do
so and be
damned.

Short of that,
allow me to continue
tending to this poor
creature.





Perhaps you
speak truly, but
I dare not take
the chance.



Where the
hell did Jessica
get off to?!



Not sure how
we keep everybody
in line if the juice in
the collars and
cuffs go dead.

Stupid bitch
didn't even put the
shackles on the new
girl! She'll fry for
this when I find
her!



You're the one who trained her, Bean! This is your fault!

Unhh--! Sor--sor--



Idiot.

With all the weapons we have here, do you know how dangerous it is, leaving girls unprocessed?

I said I'm sorry!



Unhhh...

You want something done right...



Look who's awake. Like your new jewelry?

Get away from me!



This'll knock some of the fight outta her!

You know those moments when the hero charges in and comes up with some real pithy, witty entrance line that shows off that he's both clever and lethal?



Die, you bastards!

Roland ain't all that clever, truth t'tell.

On the other hand, he'd have had 'em all cold...



...if the girl's screams hadn't distracted him.



Still, he manages to take down all but one of them, with the fifth using his cowardly disappearing act to make tracks.

But between the escapee sounding the alarm and Roland making enough racket to wake the dead, a brief respite is all they got.

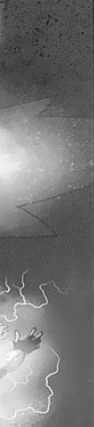
I like the sound of that.

Who are you?

Jessica. A prisoner, like you.

Not like her. No one's staying a prisoner here.

Grab some weapons.



I found the controller!

U-use it!

Just need to find the--

Find it faster!



Got it! Jessica, get those things off her and yourself.



More Not-Men approaching. They're throwing aside caution, it seems.

That's a mistake, because if I can hear them, I can kill them.



There are other prisoners...

Free them. I'll take care of our hosts.



Roland is as good as his word.

If ya ask me, being invisible has made them sloppy. They think if ya can't see them, they're damned-nigh invincible.



Back away from the door!



Susan!
Oh my God...!

I...I thought we'd never--

Whatever you thought was wrong.



And they're
right...

...the key words
being "damned-nigh."



Jessica, get
them out of here.
I'm going to help
Roland.



Grab weapons,
girls! Show them we'll
never be prisoners
again!



One of the Not-Men almost got away, but he made the mistake of running through a pool of blood and leaving footprints.

You just *don't* make those kind of mistakes around a gunslinger and hope to live.

But barely has Roland put paid to him...



Did you hear that scream?



Yes.
yesyesyes!



Don't let it be Susan.

I pray to my ancestors, to God on high, to the man Jesus, to any and all who will listen...





Unfortunately, that's the second that the bumbler leaps at the Not-Man's throat, blocking Roland's shot.



You think a man who once fought beside **John Farson** is going to be dispatched by vermin like you?!





You...you
monster!!!!

Heh. You
wound me,
sweetheart.







I have a host of friends whom you'll be meeting shortly. I think you'll like Aileen particularly.

They'll take good care of you. I swear they will.

You believe me, don't you?

Yes...



He's... he's gone. I'm so sorry.

you're not crying.

I have no tears left.

Normally the Widow Black would have kept someone like Roland away from her daughter's bed with sword, spear and her teeth buried in his neck.

But this night, after the celebration of her return has died down...



...the widow turns a deaf ear to the rhythmic squeaking of Susan's bed.

Come morning, though, all Susan will find is a note on her pillow and a cooling space on the mattress.



Now the man named Brown, he'd listened real quiet-like to this whole story as Roland told it, which was close to how I tell it 'cept, y'know, not as good.

Sorry the girl, Aileen, died. And the critter.

Anyone close to me dies. Should death come knocking at your door and ask if we've met...

...tell him no.

Do 'ee feel better from the telling, at least?

Yes, actually.

Odd. I'm unaccustomed to feeling better. No doubt the sensation will pass all too soon.

What will 'ee do now?



Catch the
Man in Black and
force him to tell
me the location
of the Park
Tower.

In yer
dreams.



I've looked
there. Best to
try somewhere
else.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE WHEEL OF KA...



Those of you who have read all of the Dark Tower novels may have experienced a strange sensation of déjà vu while turning the pages of the present tale. Did the Dogan seem familiar? What about the piles of dead military men, or the caches of weapons? And what about Roland's dependence on his bumbler's sensitive nose, or Billy's awful end? And then again there is the tavern girl named Susan, who bears such an uncanny resemblance to Roland's greatest love—Susan Delgado of Hambry. If the landscape, characters, and relationships you have just read about seemed familiar to you, then our creative tet has accomplished what it set out to do. You see, many months ago while we were still planning this story arc, Stephen King gave us a prime directive. Our present tale, he said, must be dictated by the two most important forces found in the Dark Tower universe—the forces of ka and ka-tet.

We all know that old Mid-World truism: Ka is a wheel, its one purpose is to turn, and in the end it always comes back to the place where it started. But what exactly does ka mean? Like so

many words in High Speech, ka is difficult to define precisely. It signifies life force, consciousness, duty, and destiny. In the common speech of Mid-World, it can refer to a place, or destination, toward which a person must journey. The closest terms in our language are probably fate and destiny, although ka also implies our karma, or the fate that we create for ourselves over the course of many lifetimes. Sometimes Roland compares ka to a train hurtling us forward. Unfortunately for him—and for us—it is not necessarily a sane force, or a kind one.

Ka, as we have just seen, refers to destiny. A tet refers to a group of people with the same interests or goals. Hence ka-tet is the place where men's and women's lives are joined by fate. Literally speaking, ka-tet means "one made from many." Tet-mates can be lifelong friends, as were Roland, Cuthbert, and Alain, or they can be enemies, such as Roland and the wizard Marten Broadcloak. But whether ka-mates are allies or adversaries, the bonds that link them are so powerful that they cannot be manipulated by personal ambition or conscious effort. They can even outlast death.

The forces of ka and ka-tet are so central to the Dark Tower series, and to Mid-World philosophy in general, that they are associated with many other frequently used terms. The more sinister side of ka can be seen in words like ka-shume, which describes the dark, foreboding

emotion a person feels when disaster awaits his or her ka-tet. Whenever we try to outwit our fates or change our destinies, a price must be paid. Ka-shume, and the disaster it presages, is the ferryman's coin. Another ka-related term is that of ka-mai (or ka-mais, if you are referring to more than one individual), which means destiny's fool. Despite their silly antics and daring escapades, ka-mais (such as Cuthbert Allgood) seem to lead charmed lives. They have a strange luck which means that—despite the odds stacked against them—they miraculously escape danger time after time. Such individuals unwittingly serve a much greater purpose, either as important players in cosmic events, or as catalysts for those events. Unfortunately, ka-mais face their own hazards, since once destiny has made full use of such people, their ends are rarely happy. In the later Dark Tower novels, Roland is sometimes called Gilead's ka-mai.

So, where does the force of ka originate? That, my friends, is the great question of the Dark Tower novels. In order to change Mid-World's ka, Roland is journeying toward the Dark Tower (that linchpin of the time-space continuum) which lies at the heart of End-World. He seems to believe that ka spins from the Tower, and that whatever God or Demon resides there can change Mid-World's destiny. Roland's assumption is not surprising. After



all, Gan—the animating spirit of the Dark Tower—is often called Ka-Gan.

And so, dear fellow Constant Readers, mentioning the Dark Tower brings me back to the Mid-World saying which I quoted at the beginning of this article. Ka is a wheel, its one purpose is to turn, and in the end it always comes back to the place where it started. This phrase is not only central to the Dark Tower novels and comics, but to the story cycle whose final issue you now hold in your hands. You see, many of the characters, places, and events in this story are pre-echoes of characters, places, and events that Roland will encounter later in his journey toward the Dark Tower. This is because in the Dark Tower universe, time and destiny are circular, and even the bonds of ka-tet are destined to repeat.

In our world, we tend to think of time and fate as linear. This expectation that one event will follow after another—none of them repeating—is based on our personal



experience of reality and time. Even small children know that we are born, we grow up, we grow old, and then we die. In Greek mythology, this linear progression is explained by the three sister Fates—Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos. When a person is born, Clotho draws the thread of that person's life through her distaff. Lachesis spins its length, and Atropos (the eldest) severs it. Hence our existences are (metaphorically speaking) lengths of thread. However in the Dark Tower universe, neither time nor existence can be so easily explained. Not only do we seem to return to the same places, but we bond with the same people, over and over.

As we all know, the Dark Tower is not only the hub of the Mid-World world-wheel, but it is also the hub of all the worlds. It is the

axis upon which time, space, and dimension rotate, and as such it is the nexus point of all possible realities. If you have access to the right kind of magic (most likely one of Maerlyn's magic spheres), or if you can travel like the Manni through the todash taken (holes in reality), you can jump from your own orbiting where and when to other wheres and whens, both past and future. As Jake Chambers and Eddie Dean discover in *Wolves of the Calla*, it is even possible to leap into a previous period of your own life and witness yourself living an earlier day. You may even change the events of that day, though interrupting or altering the spin of ka's wheel is extremely risky and may result in ka-shume.

In the Dark Tower Universe, there are not only multiple worlds circling around the Dark Tower, but many versions of those worlds. There are even multiple versions of our world, and each one contains





alternative versions of us. These other people are (to borrow a term from the related Stephen King/Peter Straub novel *The Talisman*) our Twinners. These Twinners are both like us and unlike us. How can this be? Imagine, for example, that you studied accountancy at college to please your parents, even though in the secret recesses of your heart you wanted to be an actor. On this level of the Tower you graduated and landed a comfortable (if dull) job as a CPA. However, in at least one of the parallel realities spinning around the Tower, you followed your secret wish and are now an accomplished thespian. In the Dark Tower universe, the phenomenon of Twinning isn't just restricted to parallel dimensions.

Ka is a wheel, its one purpose is to turn, and in turning it makes us face our decisions over and over again. We get the chance to correct our mistakes . . . or repeat them. As in the karmic view, we can learn from what we have done and move on, or we can be trapped in an ever-repeating cycle. It is exactly this kind of echoing, and the phenomenon of Twinning which is associated with it, that I have tried to build into this story.

As we all know, Roland

and the Man in Black (also known as Marten Broadcloak and Walter O'Dim), are bound by the ties of ka. Though they are lifelong enemies, they are also ka-tet. Because of this, it seemed appropriate to begin our tale by echoing both *The Gunslinger* (the first of the Dark Tower novels), and *The Gunslinger Born* (the first of our graphic novels), and by showing Roland chasing this elusive sorcerer over the barren reaches of the Mohaine Desert. After all, chasing the Man in Black and seeking the Tower is the essence of Roland's ka.

In Issue 3 of our story, we see that the forces of ka and ka-tet really do transcend death. In this section of our tale, Roland (who has returned to the ruins of Gilead in order to place Aileen's body in the gunslinger crypt) meets the ghost of Hax, Gilead's treacherous head cook. As boys, Roland and Cuthbert Allgood discovered that their friend Hax was a secret ally of the gunslingers' enemy, John Farson. Despite their love for Hax, Roland and Bert remembered the faces of their fathers and turned Hax in for treason. In our tale Roland is forced to confront this aspect of his past, just as the ghost Hax must recognize and pay penance for the devastation



that resulted from his treachery.

For those of you who have read the earlier Dark Tower graphic novels, the most obvious Twinning in our present tale can be found in the character of the tavern girl named Susan. In appearance, Susan Black looks almost exactly like Susan Delgado, Roland's first and greatest love. However, Roland's ka is too monomaniacal for diversions such as romantic attachment. Although Roland helps to free Susan Black's friends from the cruel Not-Men, in the end their love is doomed. Just as Roland took leave of Susan Delgado so that he could battle the Big Coffin Hunters and steal the magical seeing sphere called Maerlyn's Grapefruit for the gunslingers of Gilead, unwittingly abandoning her to the raging blood-thirst of the Hambry townsfolk and the fires of Charyou Tree, so he leaves the second Susan so that he can

continue his pursuit of the Man in Black and his quest for the Dark Tower.

Although the story of Roland and Susan is the most obvious example of ka's wheel, our tale contains a subtler but perhaps more far-reaching illustration of the forces of ka-tet. That example is the relationship between Roland and his bumbler companion called Billy. At Stephen King's request, I made Billy both a tet-mate and Twinner of the much loved bumbler of the Dark Tower series. And as such, Billy shares some of Oy's ka.

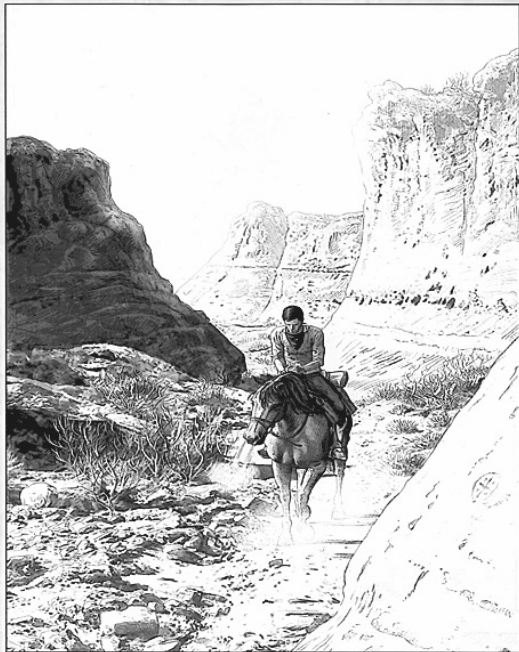
And with that final thought, I will leave you. I hope you have enjoyed our story, and will join us for the next leg of our journey. Until then—

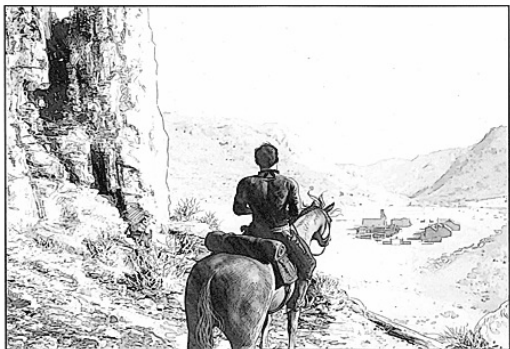
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Nights!

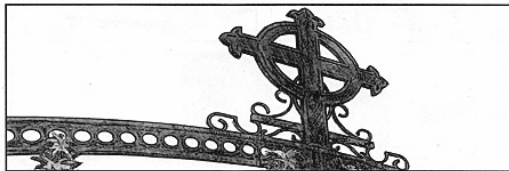
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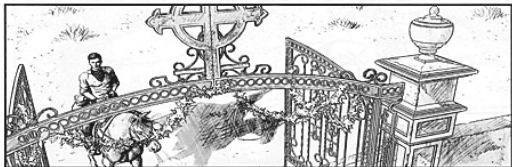
LITTLE SISTERS OF ELURIA PREVIEW

As we wrap up *The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger - The Journey Begins*, we're already looking ahead to our next exciting series, *The Little Sisters of Eluria*. Artist Luke Ross joins the team for this series, as Roland once again finds himself in a night of trouble, but quick. Check out these first inks from Luke, and be sure to pick up the first issue of *The Little Sisters of Eluria*, on sale 12/8/2010!









NEXT ISSUE: SHEEMIE TAKES A TRIPPY TRIP DOWN THE
WIZARD'S RAINBOW. SO I THINK. SO HE DOES





All is not well in Mid-World. Gunslinger Roland Deschain, the young man whose destiny it is to seek and save the Dark Tower, has seen his father's Affiliation fall to the Good Man's forces. With his ka-tet murdered and Gilead in ruins, the troubled Deschain is now truly alone for the first time in his life. But there is hope: Roland stalks the deserts in search of the Man in Black, who holds the key to righting this out-of-synch world. What lies in wait for the world's last gunslinger, though, no seeing sphere could portend...

From the creative team that brought Roland's early adventures to life comes a new phase in the saga of the last gunslinger. This is a dark chronicle of revenge, lust, betrayal, and destiny—a cosmic quest that could only be conceived by master storyteller Stephen King.

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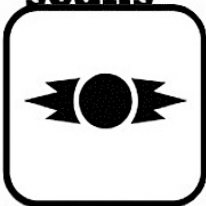


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